

Bill Nelson's remarks

Oct. 4, 2007

Four decades ago, our nation belatedly enacted a law to guarantee every U.S. citizen an equal right to vote.

We believe there's no reason that can excuse the denial of this right.

Yet, unbelievably, our national political party has decided not to count the votes in Florida's 2008 presidential primary.

They won't count my vote, or Rep. Hastings', or the votes of more than 4 million registered Democrats.

Equally troubling, the average citizen no longer can see their candidates for president.

The party bosses have barred the candidates from campaigning in Florida, except for private fundraisers.

This is unacceptable. Paying for political participation is unacceptable, just as a poll tax was unacceptable.

The issue before us is simple: It's a case of fundamental rights vs. party rules.

On behalf of 4.25 million Florida voters, Rep. Hastings and I have filed this lawsuit against Howard Dean and others.

But it's really a lawsuit about the right of *every* American to have access to the ballot box, and to have their vote count – and, to have it count as intended.

It's about the principle of one person, one vote.

It's about the person who takes time in the rain or the cold to stand in line at the local church or precinct house, and to vote, and to come out feeling like they did their part in this grand American process.

And they should be told their vote doesn't count?

This dispute comes while we as a nation are immersed in seemingly greater debates: Iraq, health care, home foreclosures.

But rarely does an issue arise that is so sacred to our democracy.

We believe the right to vote, and to have that vote count, is – in fact - the cornerstone of our democracy.

Without it, nothing else will work.